

CHEAP METHODS: HOW UNSCRIPTURAL METHODS CHEAPEN THE WORK OF GOD

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The following is by E. L. Bynum:

Churches are facing a crisis today. Many of them are recognizing the need of doing something, but instead of returning to New Testament doctrine and practice, they are turning to cheap unscriptural methods. While this may seem to be the answer, it will spell the ruin of any church.

Examples of Cheap Methods

1. Contests are the fad of our day. Many seem to be convinced that all progress in the Sunday school must be centered around some contest. There are many different kinds appearing all the time. This usually results in the church building being decorated with amateurish drawings and cut-outs, which look like a cross between a carnival and a kindergarten.

There are a number of independent organizations operated by publicity experts, whose main business is to plan these contests and campaigns and then sell them to the churches.

2. Along with the contests come the give aways. You name it, and probably some church is giving it away as a prize. Here are a few that we have heard of lately: Bibles, balloons, T-shirts, ball point pens, goldfish, helicopter rides, trading stamps, horse and saddle, cars, trips to the Holy Land, and at least one Baptist Church gave away a boat and motor. This creates in the mind of adults, as well as children, the idea that they must be bribed or paid to do the work of God.

3. Parties and social activities hold a very important place in the average church. There is a party to fit any occasion, whether it be a holiday or a celebration. The religious book stores have plenty of books that tell how it is to be done. The common excuse for such a program of social activities is: "We must do it to hold the young people." Why don't they admit that the churches have become "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God?" (II Timothy 3:4)

4. The church kitchen is a potent weapon today. The kitchen outranks the pulpit in many churches. There is a constant round of banquets, suppers, and breakfasts which are calculated to appeal to every age group and class of individual. There is the kick-off banquet, the victory dinner, the revival breakfast, and visitation supper. The kitchen is used to active members, restore the inactive ones, and to get the prospects in the church. "For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple." (Romans 16:18) "... whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things." (Philippians 3:19)

5. Sports have now made a full fledged invasion of the churches. There are the church softball leagues, the church basketball leagues, and the church bowling leagues. This of course costs a lot of money for uniforms and equipment, but it can usually be raised. Because it is going for such a good cause.

If a church is busy with contests, give-aways, suppers, parties, and sports, when do they have time to carry out the Great Commission? (Matt. 28:18-20)

6. Entertainment is used to draw a crowd. The entertainer who can draw a crowd, and yet throw in a little religion, is very much in demand. If you can play a tune on whisky bottles, cow bells, or a saw, you have got it made. Quartets who can put a lot of "rock" into "gospel songs" are a sure thing to draw a crowd. (The preacher can preach a short message after they are through. Poor soul.)

There are a lot of ex-Hollywood greats, or could have been greats, who are now in the "gospel" business. (It is a wonder that Hollywood has survived, with so many of them quitting.) The crowds come to hear the sordid

story of their lives, which usually glorifies the flesh rather than God. (A poor fellow who was raised by Christian parents and has lived a clean life, is definitely handicapped with this crowd.)

Why these cheap methods work

We live in a day when it is commonly believed that anything is good if it works. We make bold to say that these cheap methods do work, they do produce results. Why?

1. They appeal to the worldly minded people.
2. They are aimed at the juvenile, and immature mind. (That is the kind of mind that the average American has. For further information watch your TV set.)
3. Carnal methods in the church are so near the methods of the world, that is easy to get people to feel at home in the church. In other words, it is easier to bring the world into the church than to get the world out of people.
4. It is easier to get people enthused over some man-made plan, rather than the simple Bible method.
5. These cheap methods make no provision for the crucifixion of the flesh. "And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affection and lusts." (Galatians 5:24)
6. They appeal to the vast multitude of lost people in the churches today.

What we need today

1. We need to recognize that unscriptural methods cheapen the name of God, cheapen the Word of God, and cheapen the power of God.
2. We need to realize that these methods produce weak shallow converts who will not stand in time of testing.
3. We need to return to God's plan. The flesh must be crucified. God must be recognized as holy and given His rightful place. The Word of God must be read, studied, preached, and practiced. Prayer must be engaged in. (Not just a formality) Walking in the spirit must become a reality. Visitation must become an every day practice.

Brethren, the day is so desperate, the hour is so late, and the opposition is so great, that we dare not, we must not, use anything but the very best.

God's way, if practiced, will produce results that are real and everlasting.

There are many imitations, but there is no substitute.